SPOTLIGHT ON

Messerschmitt Bf 109 in Romania

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MMPBOOKS

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Introduction

Messerschmitt Bf 109 E

In December 1939, *the Aeronautica Regală Română* placed an order for 50 Messerschmitt Bf 109 E fighters with Bayerische Flugzeugwerke. The first eleven aircraft arrived during the spring of 1940 and the remaining 39 came a year later. Based on Pipera-Bucharest airfield, the newly formed *Grupul 7 Vânătoare* (7th Fighter Group), received the modern German fighters. The commander of the Group was *Lt. Comandor. Av.* Alexandru "Popicu" Popişteanu.

The Romanian Bf 109 E fighters took part in Operation Barbarossa from the very beginning of operations, when they escorted the bombers attacking Soviet airfields.

Starting with 1943, the remaining Bf 109 Es were assigned to training duties or to the 52nd Fighter Squadron. This unit flew fighter cover missions over the Black Sea and in 1944 joined the rest of the Groups in several interception missions against the US 15th Air Force.

After August 1944, the now-obsolete Bf 109 Es did not see any further action and were phased out in 1946.

Messerschmitt Bf 109 E Camouflage and markings

The Messerschmitt Bf 109 Es were delivered to the *Aeronautica Regală Română* painted in a factory camouflage scheme of RLM 71 *Dunkelgrün* upper-surfaces with RLM 65 *Hellblau* under-surfaces. The engine cowling, the fuselage band and the undersides of the wingtips were painted RLM 04 *Gelb*. The rudder was painted in the national colours of blue, yellow and red. From the spring of 1941, the "Michael Cross" markings were painted on wings and fuselage. The spinner was painted 2/3 black and 1/3 white. During the Barbarossa campaign, according to Order No. 551/13 of June 1944, the yellow colour had to be removed from the engine cowling. In the case of the Emils, a compromise solution was reached by partially covering the top and sides of the cowling with green paint.

Messerschmitt Bf 109 G

The Bf 109 G entered *Aeronautica Regală Română* service in March 1943. The first unit to be equipped with it was *Grupul 7 Vânătoare* (previously equipped with the Bf-109 E).

On 10 March 1943 the Group made up of 43rd, 57th and 58th squadrons, was transferred to JG 3 *Udet* and began training on the 40 recently-received Bf 109 G aircraft.

The last major ARR offensive of the war was launched on 25 February 1945, aimed at supporting the ground forces attacking the Zvolen area in Slovakia. The last mission of the war for *Grupul 9 Vânătoare* was flown on 11 May when four Bf 109 G fighters escorted Romanian bombers attacking the remnants of the Vlasov Army that refused to capitulate.

The majority of Romanian aces achieved their victories while flying the 'Gustav'. This was by far the best fighter ARR had during the war and also the most effective. It was the only Romanian fighter to score confirmed victories against the P-51 Mustang.

Messerschmitt Bf 109 G Camouflage and markings

The Messerschmitt Bf 109 G aircraft were delivered to *Aeronautica Regală Română* from two major sources: German-manufactured imported or captured aircraft and Romanian aircraft manufactured by IAR Braşov and Caransebeş.

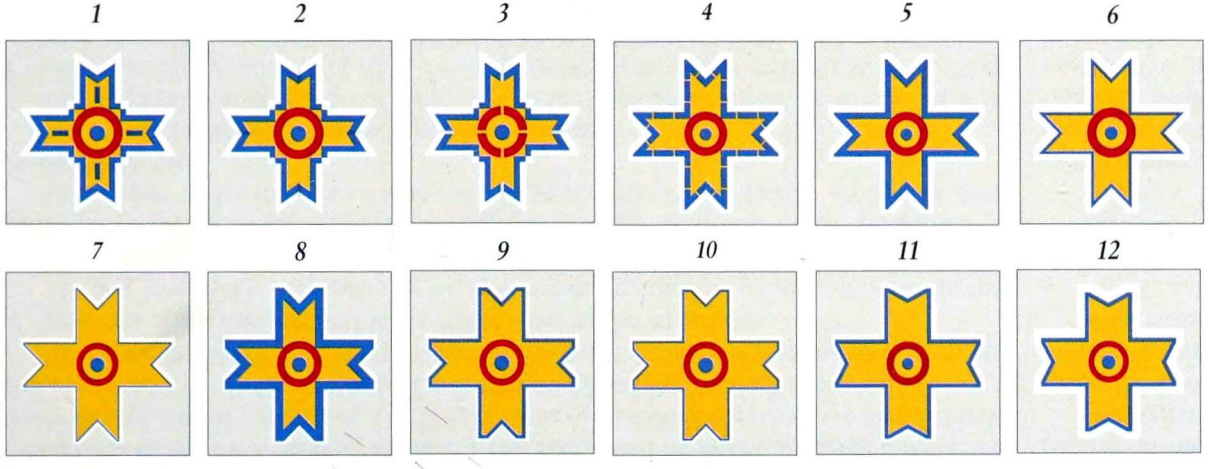
Starting in 1943, the Messerschmitt Bf 109 Gs were delivered (from *Luftwaffe* stocks) in the usual German camouflage of a two-tone RLM74 *Graugrün* and RLM 75 *Grauviolett* camouflage on the upper-surfaces and RLM 76 *Lichtblau* on the under-surfaces. In spring 1943, the Bf 109 G-2/4s of *Grupul 7 Vânătoare* (part of JG 3 Udet) had their upper-surfaces over-painted in a Medium Green-Gray colour probably RLM 74 *Graugrün*. In summer 1943, the Bf 109 G-2s of *Escadrila* 53 wore a mottled pattern of Medium Green-Gray similar to RLM 74 *Graugrün* sprayed over a Light Blue similar to RLM 76 *Lichtblau*.

The Romanian Bf 109 Gs used on the Eastern Front had the under-surface of the engine cowling, the under-surfaces of the wing tips and the fuselage band ahead of the tail painted yellow according to Axis regulations. The "Michael Cross" was painted on the fuselage and wings. Most of the Bf 109 Gs had the national colours of blue, yellow and red painted only on the top third of the rudder.

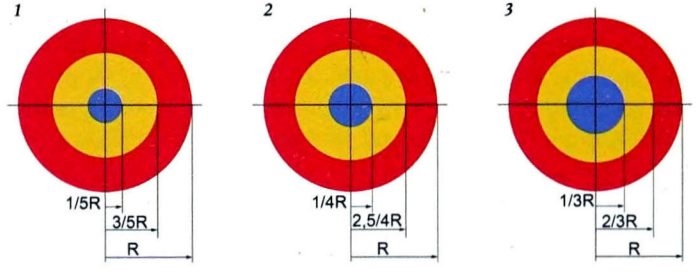
Starting in spring 1944, the IAR Braşov factory delivered the first series of Bf 109 Ga-2s (assembled from parts imported from Germany). On these aircraft, the camouflage applied to the upper surface and on the sides of the fuselage was a wavy or a mottled pattern of Medium Grey similar to RLM 75 sprayed above a Light Blue similar to RLM 76 *Lichtblau*. On the upper surface of the wings the camouflage had a distinctive scheme of large bands of Medium Grey similar to RLM 75 and Medium Green similar to RLM 74 *Graugrün*.

In early summer 1944 the IAR factory delivered the first series (licence-built) of 15 BF 109 Ga-4s with the serial numbers 300 to 315. The remaining 60 airframes with the serial numbers 316 to 375 were Bf 109 Ga-6s. These were delivered as follows: 10 in 1944, 21 in 1945, 12 in 1946 and 24 in 1947. It is unclear what colours were used on these airframes. It is unlikely that IAR Braşov were able to secure RLM colours at that stage of the war. It is more likely that locally-sourced colours were used instead, which were mixed to match existing camouflage colours. The two-tone camouflage of the upper surface consisting of Dark Green similar to RLM 71 or to RLM 64 and Light Grey similar to RLM 02 or RLM 75. The sides of the fuselage were covered with a dense pattern of small mottles in the two upper camouflage colours applied over Light Blue, possibly similar to RLM 65 or to RLM 76.

On the Western Front, the Romanian Bf 109 Gs had the under-surface of the engine cowling, the under-surfaces of the wing tips, and the fuselage band ahead of the tail painted white as "Allied recognition markings". Tricolour cockades were painted on the fuselage and wings. The national colours of blue, yellow and red were painted on the rudders of most of the Bf 109 Gs used on the Western Front.



Cockades



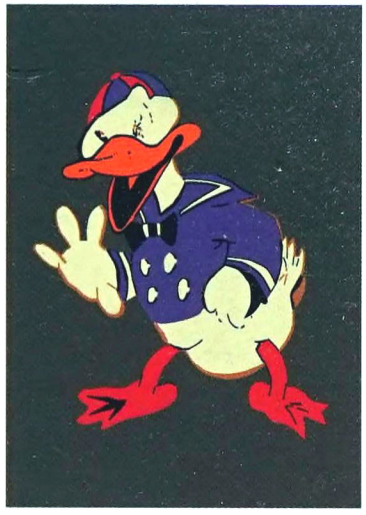
R = 1000mm, 900mm, 800mm, 700mm or 600mm

1. *All three elements are the same size*
2. *The blue element in the middle is 1.5x wider than the yellow or red elements. This was the most usual roundel.*
3. *The blue element in the middle is 2x wider than the yellow or red elements.*

Cross examples

1. *This cross is a stencil-type cross with no segmented elements and with the Roman Numeral "I" between the legs. A 960mm cross appears in a number of photographs of the upper surface of He 111 bombers. This is the only known use of such crosses.*
2. *This cross is a stencil-type cross with no segmented elements. 960mm crosses were used on the Hawker Hurricanes and 860mm crosses were used on a number of Bf 109 Gs.*
3. *This cross is a stencil-type cross with segmented elements. This may be an early stage of the cross depicted above, before the missing segments were hand-painted. 960mm crosses were used on the Hawker Hurricanes and 860mm crosses were used on a number of Bf 109 Gs.*
4. *This cross has a right-angle chevron forming the top of the "M", medium white edge, the blue "M" drawn with a medium blue line is segmented and has sharp tips. Large cockade. This type of cross was used on some He 112s.*
5. *This cross has a right-angle chevron forming the top of the "M", medium white edge, the blue "M" drawn with a medium blue line has sharp tips. Large cockade. This type of cross was used on Bf 109 , IAR 80, He 112.*
6. *This cross has a right-angle chevron forming the top of the "M", medium white edge, the blue "M" drawn with a thin blue line has sharp tips. Large cockade. This type of cross was used on Bf 109s.*
7. *This cross has a right-angle chevron forming the top of the "M", thin white edge, the blue "M" drawn with a very thin blue line has sharp tips. Small cockade. This type of cross was used only on IAR 80s.*
8. *This cross has a right-angle chevron forming the top of the "M", thin white edge, the blue "M" drawn with a thick blue line has blunt tips. Large cockade. This is the type of cross that appears in an official document issued by Subsecretatriatul de Stat al Aerului.*
9. *This cross has a right-angle chevron forming the top of the "M", thin white edge, the blue "M" drawn with a thin blue line has blunt tips. Small cockade. This type of cross was used on Bf 109s.*
10. *This cross has a right-angle chevron forming the top of the "M", thin white edge, the blue "M" drawn with a very thin blue line has blunt tips. Small cockade. This type of cross was used on Bf 109s.*
11. *This cross has an obtuse-angle chevron forming the top of the "M", thin white edge, the blue "M" drawn with a thin blue line has blunt tips. Small cockade. This type of cross was used on P.11s and Bf 109s.*
12. *This cross has an obtuse-angle chevron forming the top of the "M", thick white edge, the blue "M" drawn with a thin blue line has blunt tips. Small cockade. This type of cross was used only on Bf 109 Es. There was no "aircraft type-related" cross as such. Many aircraft of the same type (even of the same unit) were decorated with a variety of types of crosses.*

1



Bf 109 E-3 No. 2, W.Nr. 2316, "*Maril*".

Flown by *Lt. Comandor Av.* Alexandru "*Popicu*" Popişteanu, Commander of *Grupul 7 Vânătoare*, Saltz-Sturzeni, summer 1941.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. This was the personal aircraft of *C-dor. Av.* Popişteanu Alexandru at the beginning of the Bessarabian campaign. In November 1942, following the retreat from Karpovka, Bf 109 E No. 2 was unable to take-off due to technical reasons and was captured by the Russians.

2

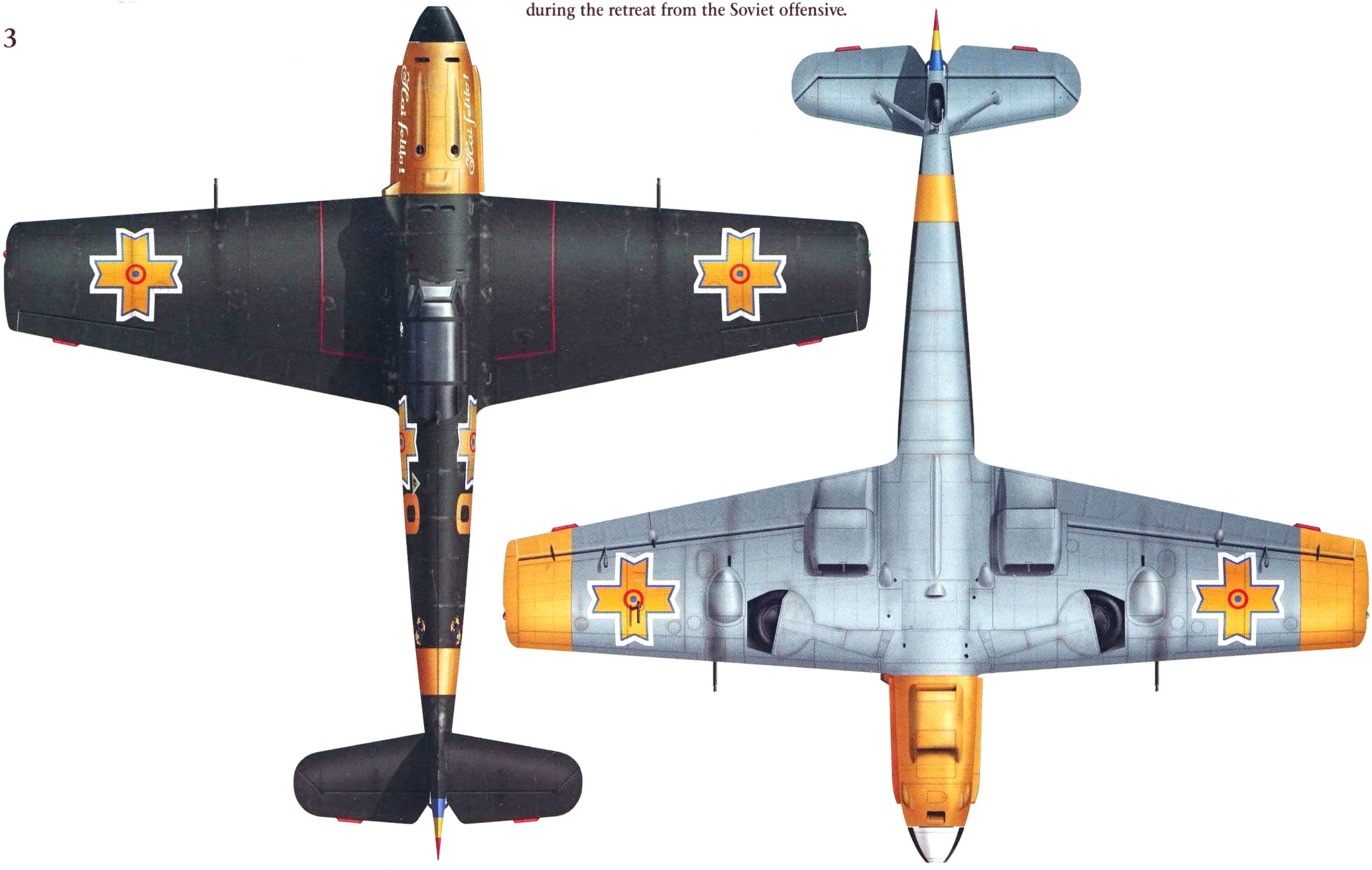
Bf 109 E-3 No. 9, W.Nr. 2486 "*Hai Fetiţo*" ("C'mon little girl")

Flown by *Lt Av.* Ioan Di Cesare, *Escadrila* 57, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, Karpovka-Stalingrad, November 1942.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. This aircraft wore the "Donald Duck" emblem of *Gr.7Vt.* on the fuselage as well as five white stripes denoting ground victories obtained in the first campaign (Barbarossa) and the "DIC" monogram painted under the cockpit. In addition, two white stripes for aerial victories were painted on the tail. This aircraft wore the standard paint scheme for the Emils of *Gr.7Vt.* with RLM 71 *Dunkelgrün* upper-surfaces and RLM 65 *Hellblau* under-surfaces. The engine cowling, the

fuselage band and the undersides of the wingtips were painted RLM 04 *Gelb*. The spinner was painted 2/3 black and 1/3 white. "*Hai Fetițo*" was flown by *Lt. Av.* Ioan Di Cesare, an ace with 16 confirmed victories. "*Fetița*" was the name of a racehorse filly, chosen by Di Cesare who was a passionate racing enthusiast. No. 9 was lost in November 1942 in Karpovka during the retreat from the Soviet offensive.

3



Bf 109 E-3 No. 27, W.Nr. 2629.

Escadrila 57, Grupul 7 Vânătoare.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. On 18 July 1941, the landing gear of the aircraft flown by *Lt Av. (r)* Di Cesare Ioan was hit by ground-fire while providing cover for friendly troops at Hânceşti-Albiţa. On his return to Huşi airfield, Di Cesare was forced to land with the landing gear up, the aircraft was damaged and it was sent to ASAM Pipera for repairs. Two white stripes were painted on the tail plane of Bf 109 E No. 27 denoting two aerial victories.

5

Bf 109 E-3 No. 14, W.Nr. 2491 "*Dor De Ducă*" ("Raring to go").

Escadrila 57, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, Bucharest-Pipera, summer 1942.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. On 4 August 1941, *Slt. Av.* Clopoțel Ovidiu in Emil No. 14 was involved in an aerial battle with 6 Ratas while on patrol with *Cpt. Av.* Bocşan, alongside *Lt. Av.* Di Cesare and *Adj. Av.* Firu, north of Taslik. Clopoțel managed to shoot down one Rata but his oil tank was hit and he force-landed north of Grigoriopol. "*Dor de Duca*" was recovered and sent to ASAM-Pipera for repairs.

Bf 109 E-3 No. 48, W.Nr. 2403 "*Don Pedro*".

Flown by *Lt Av.* Petre Protopopescu, *Escadrila* 58, *Grupul 7 Vânătoare*, Bucharest-Pipera, summer 1942.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. This aircraft was flown by Petre Protopopescu (Pedro is the Spanish for Petre). It was lost when it was hit by shells fired by T-34 tanks on Karpovka airfield in November 1942. Protopopescu was one of the officers who alongside *Cpt. Av.* Şerbănescu were involved in the defence of the airfield against Russian tanks.

Bf 109 E-3 No. 26, "Nadia II".

Flown by *Adj. Av.* Ştefan Greceanu, *Escadrila* 57, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, Saltz Bessarabia, September 1941.

Upper surfaces: Dunkelgrün RLM 71. Undersides: Lichtblau RLM. This aircraft was flown by *Adj. Av.* Ştefan Greceanu, an ace with seven confirmed victories. On 22 September 1941, "Nadia II" was set on fire in a surprise attack against the Saltz airfield by nine Ratas.

Bf 109 E-3 No. 47.

Escadrila 58, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, Nicolaev-Ukraine, November 1942.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. This aircraft wore the "IG" monogram painted on the engine cowl and three white stripes for aerial victories painted on the tail. On 26 July 1941, *Lt. Av.* Dan Scurtu, an ace with 14 confirmed victories, was hit by anti-aircraft fire and force-landed near Criuleni-Lăpuşna. Bf 109 E No. 47 was sent on 30 November 1942 for repairs to the German *Werft* in Nicolaev.

Bf 109 E-3 No. 39.

Flown by *Cpt. Av.* Vasiliu Gheorghe, *Escadrila* 58, *Grupul 7 Vânătoare*, Bessarabia, June 1941.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. This aircraft wears the markings used during the Barbarossa campaign, whereby according to Order No. 551/13 of June 1941, the yellow colour had to be removed from the engine cowling. In the case of Emils, a compromise solution was reached by partially covering the top and sides of the cowling with green paint. Two white stripes were painted under the cockpit for ground victories.

Cpt. Av. Vasiliu Gheorghe, *Cdt. Esc.* 58, was declared missing in action while flying Emil No. 39 on 2 September 1941.

Bf 109 E-3 No. 35, W.Nr. 2480.

Escadrila 58, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, Bucharest-Pipera, summer 1942.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. One white stripe was painted on the fuselage for one ground victory during the Barbarossa campaign. On 21 November 1942, *Adj. Av.* Eftimescu Marin was shot down while flying No. 35, probably hit by Soviet anti-aircraft fire, in the Stalingrad frontline area.

11

Bf 109 E-3 No. 45, W.Nr. 2731, "*Ileana*".

Escadrila 58, Grupul 7 Vânătoare, Bucharest-Pipera, summer 1942.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. The pointed spinner painted yellow (RLM 04) was probably cannibalised from an E-7.

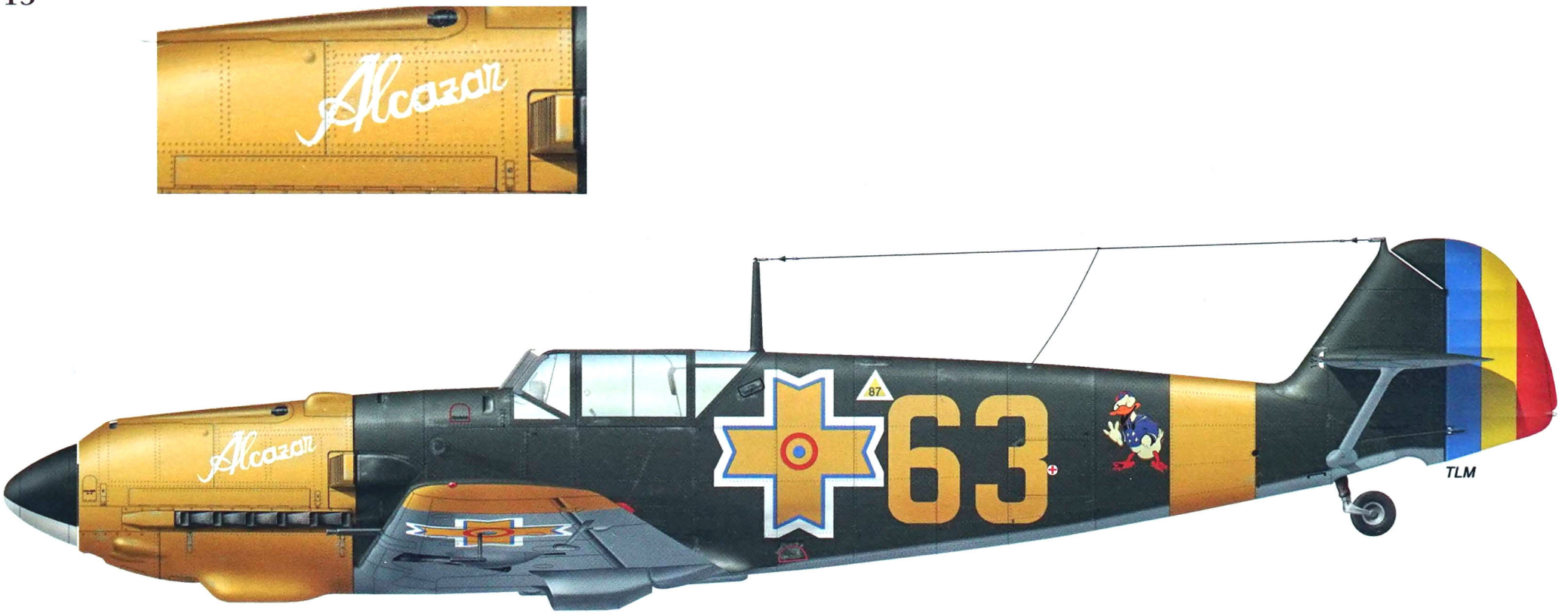
12

Bf 109 E-7 No. 64, W.Nr. 704 (a refurbished E-3) "*Nella*".

Flown by *Adj. Av.* Vinca Tiberiu, *Escadrila* 56, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, Karpovka-Stalingrad, winter of 1942.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. "Nella" was the personal mount of *Adj. Av.* Vinca Tiberiu, an ace with 12+ confirmed victories.
This aircraft wore five white stripes for ground victories painted on the left side of the fuselage and the "VT." monogram under the cockpit.
The inscription "*Bucureşti-Moscova*" (Bucharest-Moscow) was chalked above the wing root.

13



Bf 109 E-7 No. 63, W.Nr. 1482, "*Alcazar*".

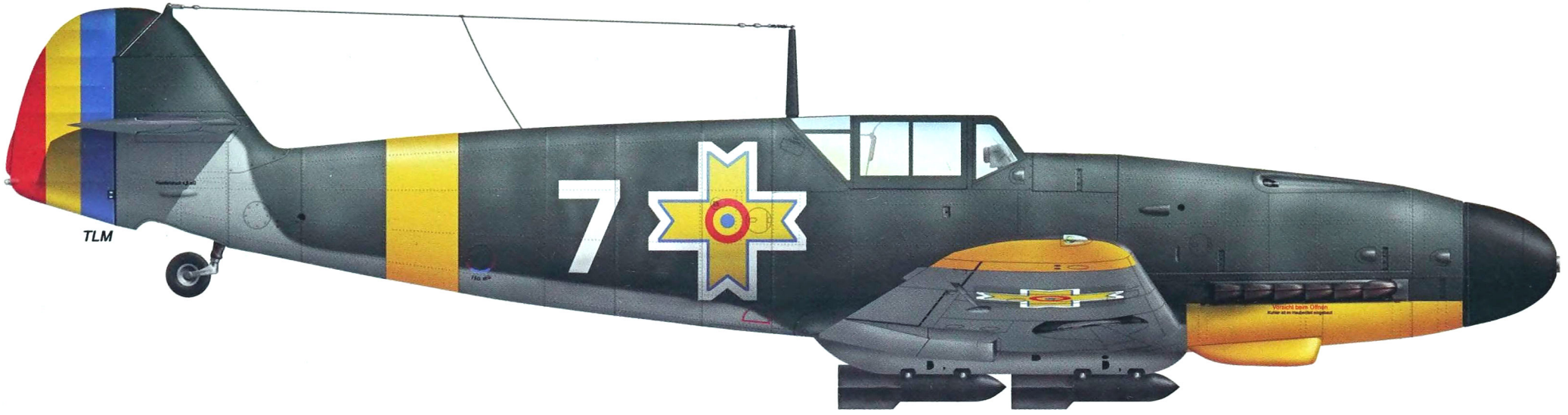
Escadrila 56, Bucureşti-Pipera, summer 1942.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. On 5 October 1942, *Adj. Av.* Chirvăsuță Cristea damaged this aircraft during take-off from Karpovka airfield. The aircraft caught fire and burned out. At the end of the war, Chirvăsuță Cristea had a tally of 18 confirmed and four unconfirmed victories and thus was the highest scoring ace among non-commissioned aviation officers.

Bf 109 E-7 No. 54, W.Nr. 3538, "*Alice*".

Flown by *Adj. Av.* Greceanu Ştefan, *Escadrila* 57, summer 1942.

Upper surfaces: *Dunkelgrün* RLM 71. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 65. In 1941 *Adj. Av.* Greceanu Ştefan flew 78 combat missions with seven confirmed and three unconfirmed victories. Eight stripes with text recording a location and date were painted under the cockpit denoting eight ground victories obtained during the 1941 campaign.



Bf 109 G-2/R2 "White 7".

Flown by *Cpt. Av.* Dan Scurtu, commander of *Escadrila* 58, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, part of JG 3 *Udet*, March 1943.

Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. On 10 April 1943, a formation of ten Romanian Bf 109 G fighters under the command of the German ace Eberhard von Boremski strafed the Soviet airfield at Starobielsk, where the Romanians claimed five Pe-2 light bombers destroyed on the ground. Only two were confirmed by the Germans, the aircraft destroyed by *Cpt. Av.* Dan Scurtu and *Slt. Av.* Duşescu Hariton. *Cpt. Av.* Dan Scurtu flew 256 combat sorties including 84 aerial battles, 14 strafing missions and eight dive-bombing missions. At the end of the war, his tally was nine air victories and two ground victories.

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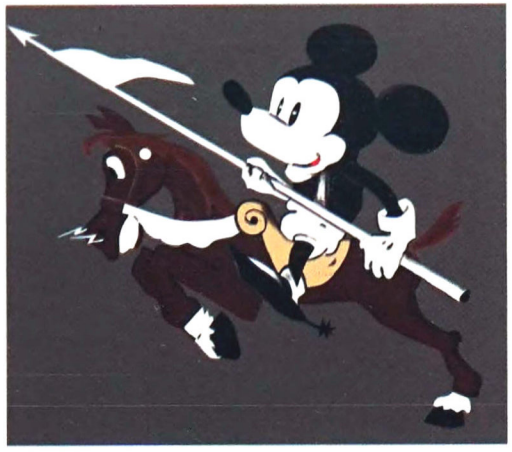
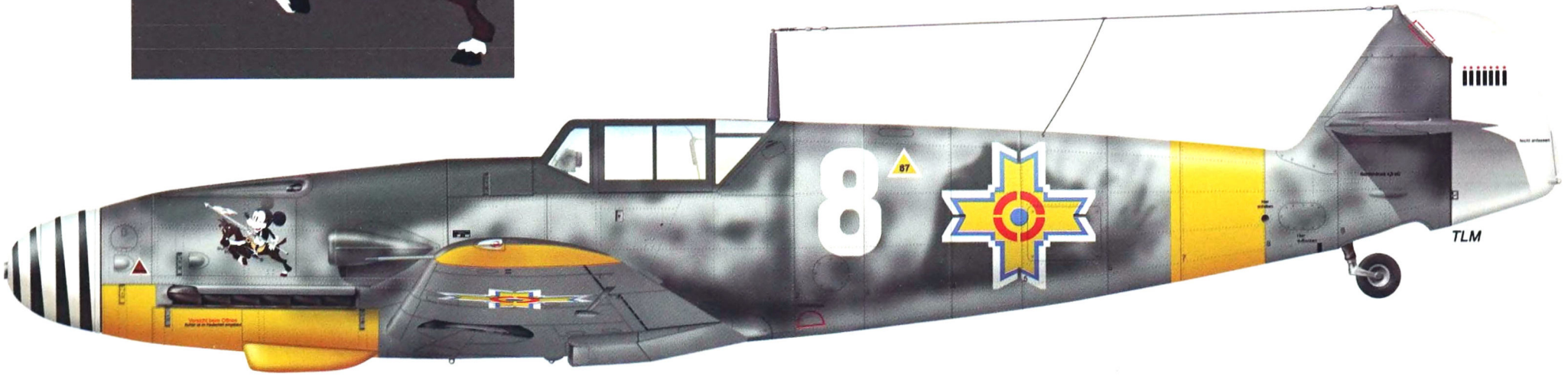




Bf 109 G-2 "White 8".

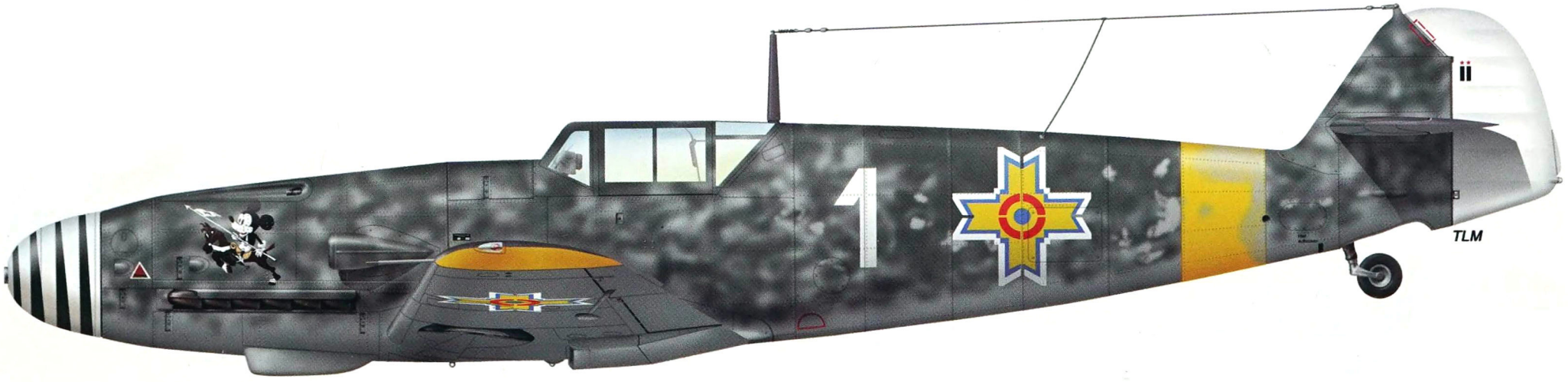
Flown by *Ofițer de echipaj Av.* Maga Ioan, *Escadrila* 53, attached as *Viertell Stafell* to JG4, Mizil airfield, July 1943.

Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. The seven victory bars painted on the rudder, represent the Soviet aircraft shot down by Maga during the first campaign. His final tally was 15 confirmed and five unconfirmed victories.

Bf 109 G-2/R6, "White 1".

Flown by *Cpt. Av.* Alexandru Şerbănescu, commander of *Grupul 7 Vânătoare*, Kramatorskaya airfield, April 1943.

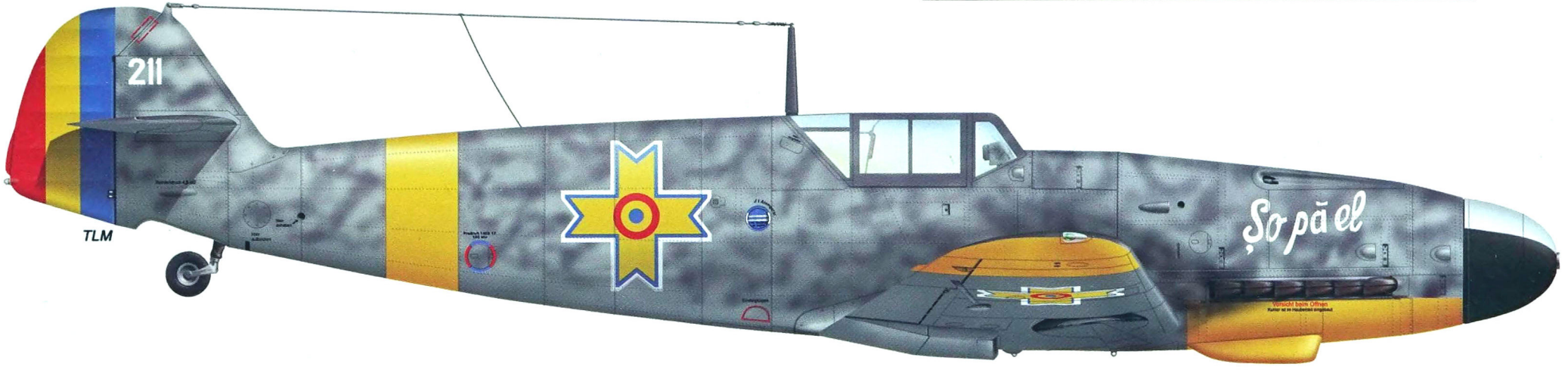
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74, and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76.
"White 1" was the personal mount of the Romanian ace Alexandru Şerbănescu, flown on the Eastern front.



Bf 109 G-2 "White 1".

Flown by *Cpt. Av.* Toma Lucian, *Escadrila* 53, attached as *Viertell Stafell* to JG4, Mizil airfield, July 1943.

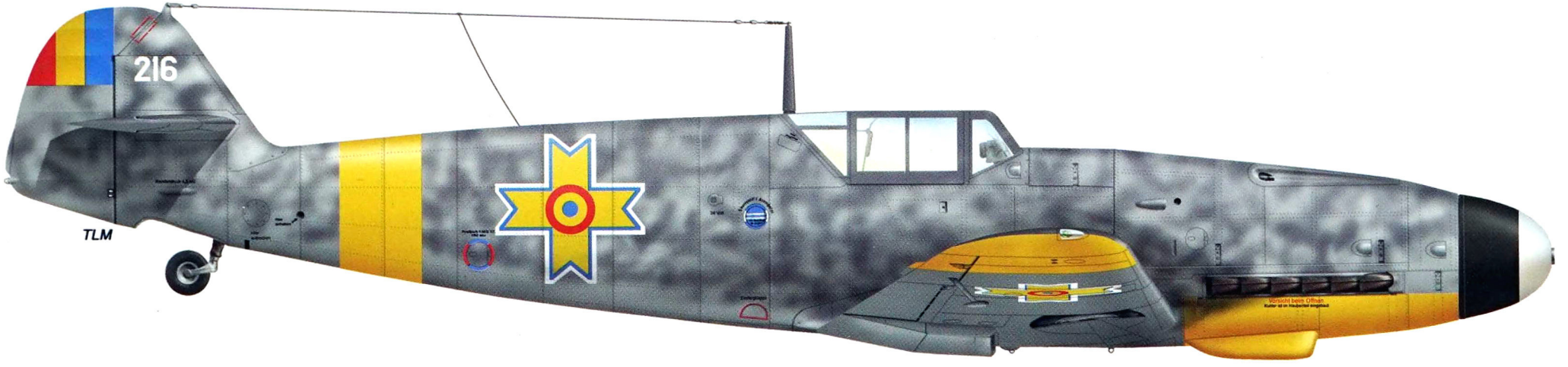
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74, and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. The two victory bars painted on the rudder, represent the two Soviet planes shot down by Toma Lucian while flying Hurricanes in the early stages of the war. Note the heavy mottling applied to this Bf 109 G-2. *Cpt. Av.* Toma Lucian flew 86 combat sorties and 112 hours in 1941. His final tally was 7 air victories. On 25 September 1944, while attacking a high-altitude reconnaissance Ju 188, he was killed by a German machine-gunner.



Bf 109 Ga-2 No. 211 "*Şo pă el*" ("Go get him").

Escadrila 58, *Grupul 7 Vânătoare*, July 1944.

Upper surfaces *Grauviolett* RLM 75, undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. This was a machine assembled by IAR. Braşov. The Bf 109 G-4 and G-6 fighters manufactured under licence by IAR were labelled Ga, where the "a" stood for "*Ausland*", the German for "Foreign country". On 18 May 1944, this aircraft was flown by *Lt. Av.* Ioan Di Cesare, the leader of *Esc. 58*, against a US bomber raid. After the engine was hit, he was forced to land on Pipera-Bucharest airfield. On 12 July 1944, *Adj. Stag. Av.* Nicolae Borhotea crashed "211" in Dămăroaia, south-west of the railway lines. On that day, three Bf 109 Gs from 7th Group were supposed to make a low pass over the airfield for Jurnal de Război, a propaganda movie. All three pilots passed so low that the officials, cameraman and their squadron leader *Lt. Av. Di* Cesare had to lie on the ground. At the end of the runaway, Borhotea's Bf 109 's engine seized and he was forced to land straight ahead in the backyard of a house. The *Gustav* broke up into three pieces. Subsequently, Borhotea was relegated to an on-board observer role, as a punishment.



Bf 109 Ga-2 No. 216.

Escadrila 58, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, June 1944.

Upper surfaces *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76.

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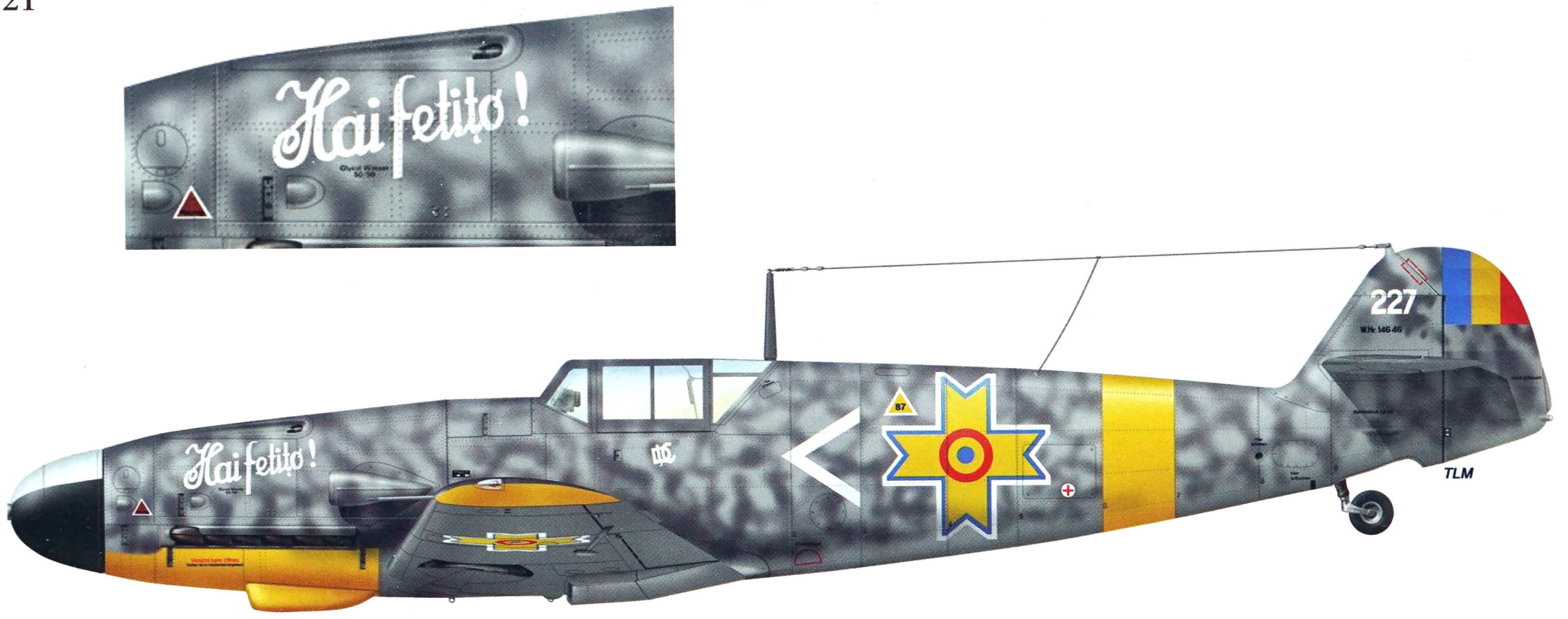


Bf 109 Ga-2 No. 227 "*Hai Fetițo*".

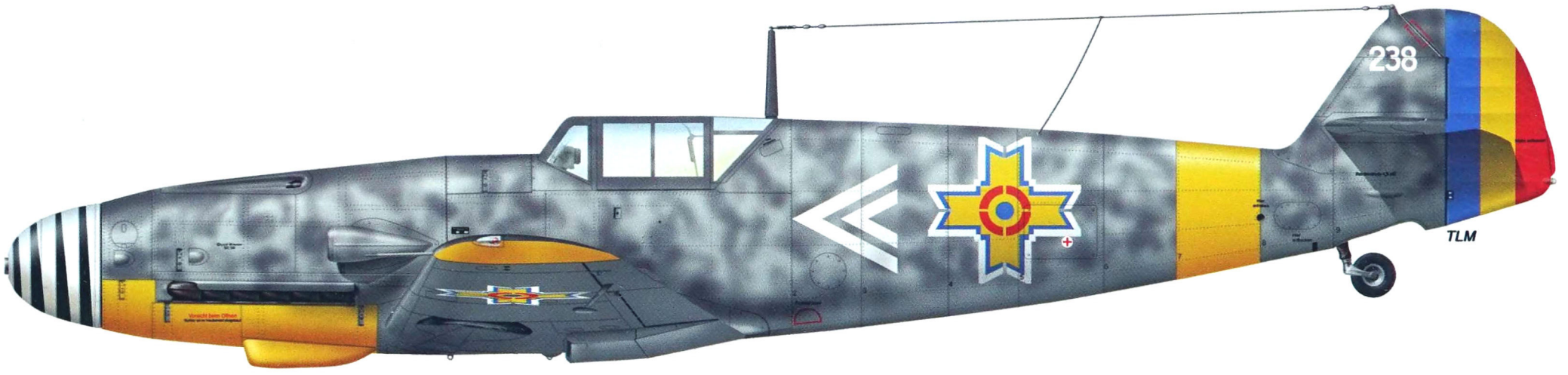
Flown by *Lt. Av. (r)* Ioan Di Cesare, commander of *Escadrila* 58, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*.

Upper surfaces *Grauviolett* RLM 75; undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76.

Bf 109 Ga-2 No. 233 "White 1".

Flown by *Adj. Stag. Av.* Neacşu Romeo, *Escadrila* 53, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, July 1944.

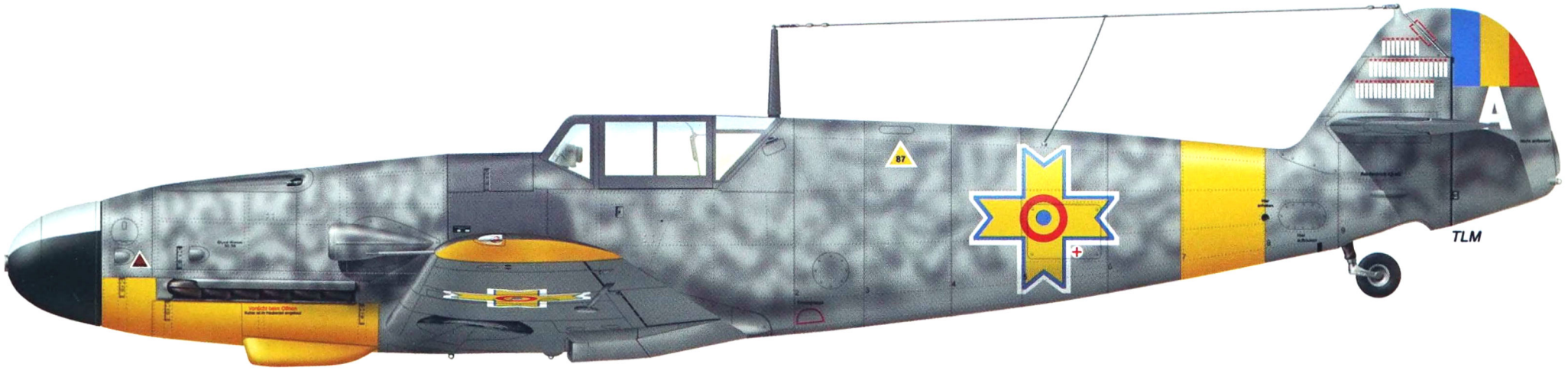
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76.



Bf 109 Ga-2 No. 238 Double Chevron.

Flown by *Cpt. Av.* Trandafirescu Virgil, *Grupul 7 Vânătoare*, Boteni airfield, June 1944.

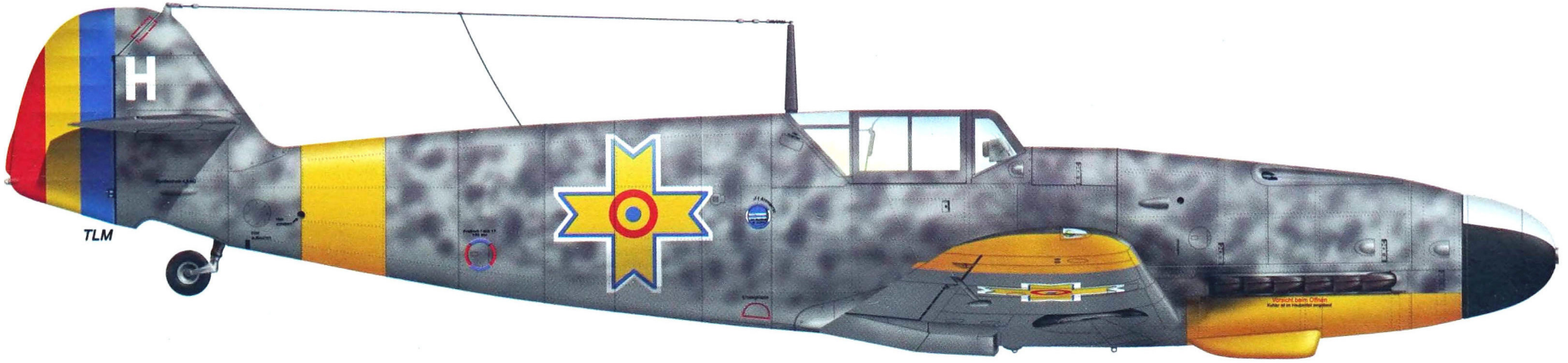
Upper surfaces *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. On 23 June, *Cpt. Av.* Trandafirescu Virgil, the Group commander, led 11 aircraft into battle. He claimed one American plane but was shot down himself by Mustangs and killed in his Bf 109 Ga-2 No. 238.



Bf 109 Ga-2 "White A".

Flown by *Căpitan Av. (r)* Constantin "*Bâzu*" Cantacuzino, *Escadrila* 57, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, May 1944.

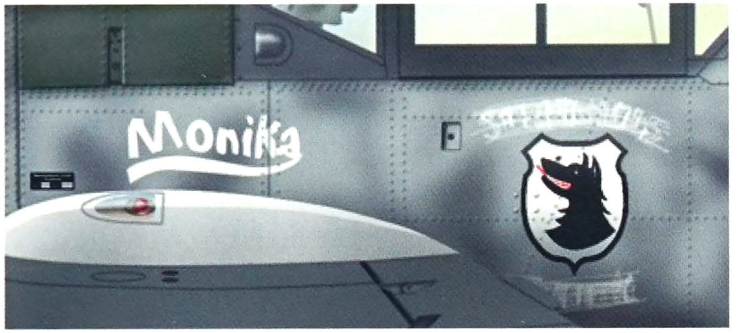
Upper surfaces: *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 76. The IAR Braşov-assembled machine "White A" was the personal mount of *Cpt. Av.* Cantacuzino between April and May 1944. On 15 April 1944, the Romanian Ace claimed one B-24 Liberator and on 28 April 1944 one Soviet Yak fighter. During the month of May, he shot down two Soviet Airacobras and four Yak fighters. Forty-two victory bars were painted in white on the vertical stabilizer with a red star added above each bar. Cantacuzino finished the war with 56 confirmed and 13 probable victories.



Bf 109 Ga-2 "White H".

Escadrila 57, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, Moldavian front, April 1944.

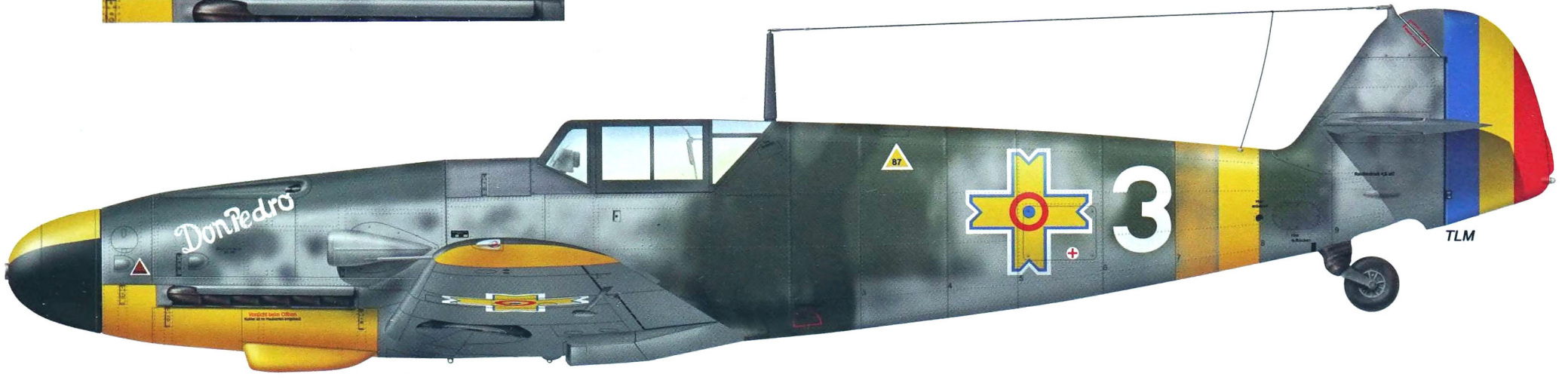
Upper surfaces *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. For unknown reasons, the individual aircraft code (a letter instead of numbers) was painted in white on the empennage of all Bf 109 Ga-2 aircraft of *Escadrila* 57 in April 1944.



Bf 109 G-2 Yellow 14 "*Monika*".

Flown by *Lt. Av.* Stinghe Dragoş, Czechoslovakia, spring 1945.

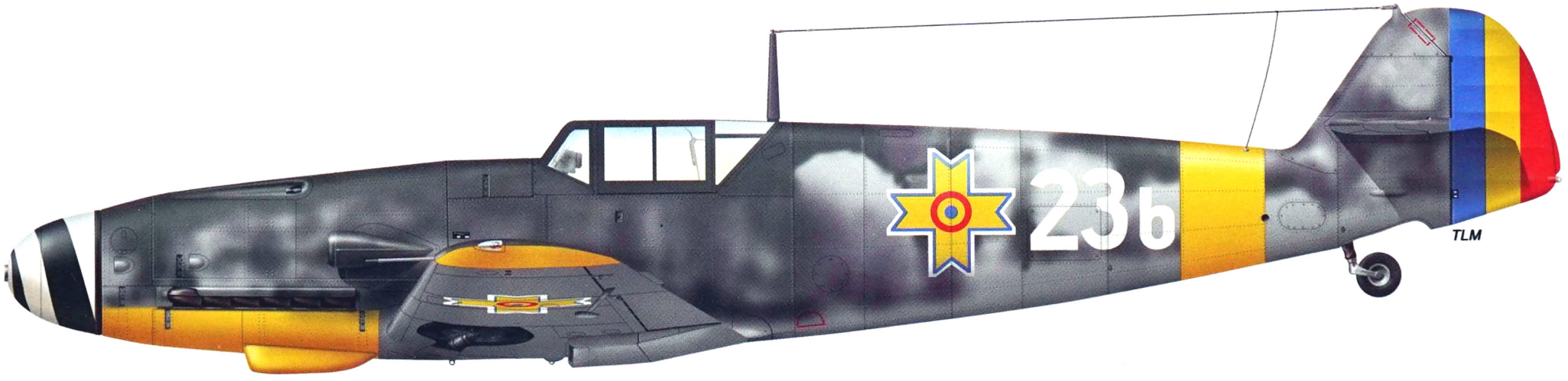
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. This particular aircraft, W.No. 14638 (previously "Yellow 10"), was flown by *Unterofizzier* Rolf Olejniczak, 9./JG 77. On 18 January 1944, it crash-landed near Mizil and it was sent to ASAM-Pipera for repair. The "Wolf head" emblem of 9/JG 77 and the crossed-out slogan "*Wanderzirkus Ubben*" painted under the cockpit were a leftover from the time when the aircraft was part of the German unit.
The name "*Monika*", written under the cockpit, was the name of Olejniczak's girlfriend.



Bf 109 G-4 White 3 "*Don Pedro*".

Flown by *Lt. Av.* Petre Protopopescu, *Escadrila* 57, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, Kirovgrad, June 1943.

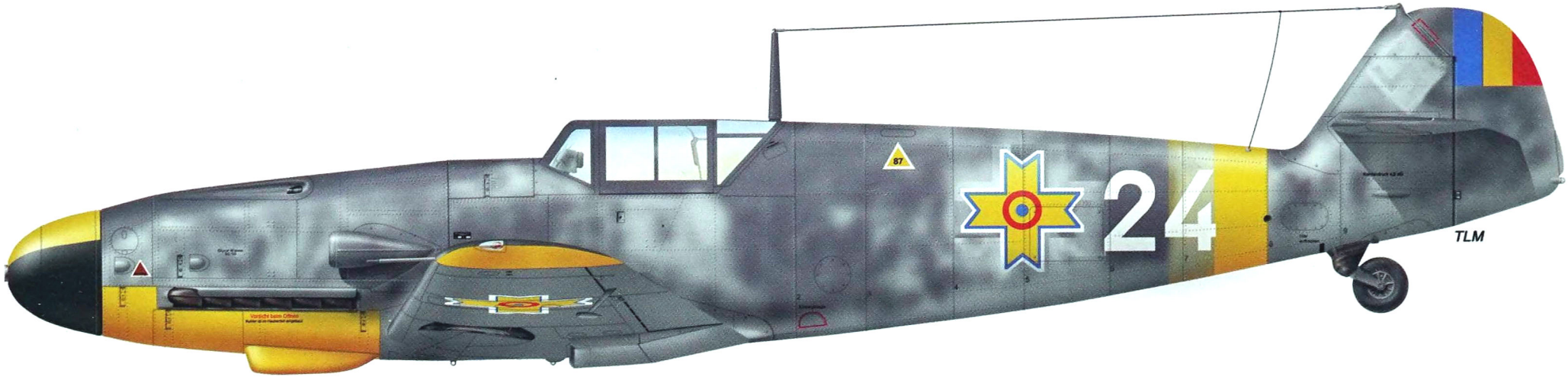
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74, and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. On 5 June 1943, at the request of the German Command, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare* took part, along with a ground assault group, a heavy-bomber group, a dive-bomber group and a reconnaissance squadron, in a number of joint exercises with the *Luftwaffe*. An aerial display took place on the Kirovgrad airfield in the presence of Marshall Antonescu and the Air Chief of Staff as well as Marshall Von Richtofen who represented the German Command. Bf 109 G-4 "White 3" was among the participating aircraft. The inscription "*Don Pedro*" written in white on the engine cowl was the nickname of pilot Petre Protopopescu.



Bf 109 G-4 "White 23b".

Grupul 9 Vânătoare, late 1943.

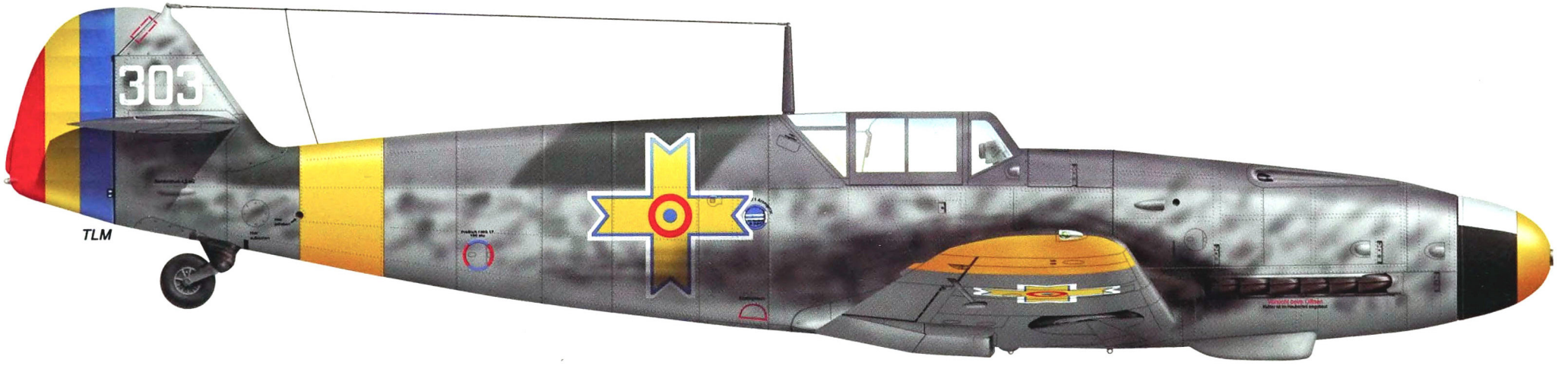
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76.
The suffix "b" after the aircraft number indicates that this was the second replacement for the original "23'. Note the large white spiral painted on the spinner.



Bf 109 G-4, W.Nr. 19607, "White 24".

Flown *by Cpt. Av. (r)* Constantin "Bâzu" Cantacuzino, *Escadrila* 58, *Grupul* 7 *Vânătoare*, August 1943.

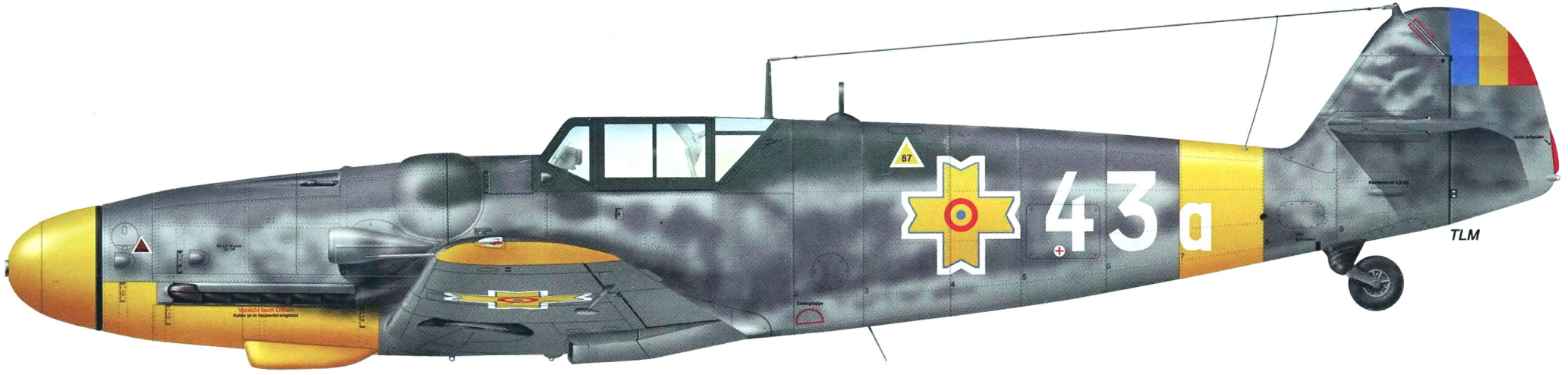
Upper surfaces *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. With this aircraft on 16 August 1943, in three combat missions, Cantacuzino scored three victories: a LaGG-3, an Il-2, a La-5 and one probable La-5, all shot down near Kramatorskaya.



Bf 109 Ga-4 No. 303.

Grupul 7 Vânătoare, Pipera-Bucharest airfield, June 1944.

Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74, and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. A total of 75 Bf 109 G fighters were built under licence by IAR Braşov. The first 15 airframes with serial No. 300 to No. 315 were type G-4. Note the high camouflage demarcation line, typical for Bf 109 G-4/6 fighters built by IAR Braşov.



Bf 109 G-6 "White 43a".

Flown by *Adj. Av.* Constantin Nicoară, *Grupul 9 Vânătoare*, Tecuci airfield, April 1944.

Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides: *Lichtblau* RLM 76. The suffix "a" after the aircraft number indicates that this was a replacement for the original "43'. Constantin Nicoară was the preferred wingman of *Cpt.* Şerbănescu Alexandru. Nicoară finished the war with five confirmed and two unconfirmed victories. His last victory was a German Bf 109 K shot down over Slovakia on 1 April 1945.

Bf 109 G-6 Yellow 1.

Grupul 9 Vânătoare, Tecuci aerodrome, June 1944.

Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. This aircraft was flown by *Cpt. Av.* Alexandru Şerbănescu, the unit commander. The emblem of the "*Dessloch-Şerbănescu*" unit was painted on both sides of the engine cowling. This unit name was adopted on 9 June 1944, after *Grupul 9 Vt.* was renamed by the German

General Dessloch for outstanding achievements. The aircraft wore standard German camouflage colours for the Bf 109 : RLM 74 *Graugrün*, and RLM 75 *Grauviolett* on the upper-surfaces with RLM 76 *Lichtblau* under-surfaces and fuselage sides. The fuselage sides were mottled with RLM 75 and RLM 71 spots. The spinner was painted 1/3 white and 2/3 RLM 70 *Schwarzgrün*. The fuselage band and the undersides of the wingtips were painted yellow RLM 04 or RLM 27. *Cpt. Av.* Şerbănescu Alexandru, Romania's second highest scoring ace with 55 air victories, was shot down over Ruşăvaţ-Buzău on 18 August 1944 by P-51 Mustangs of 309th FS, 31st FG.

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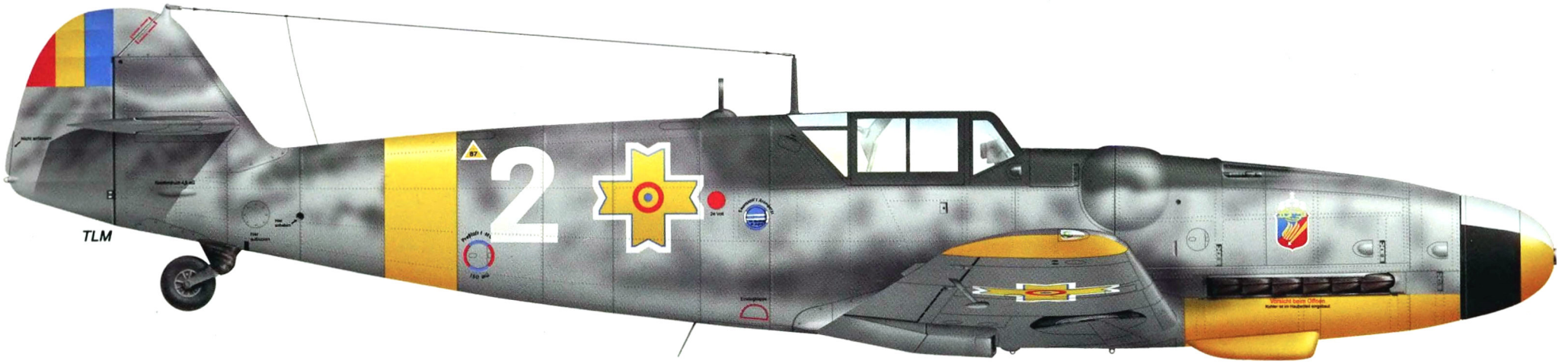
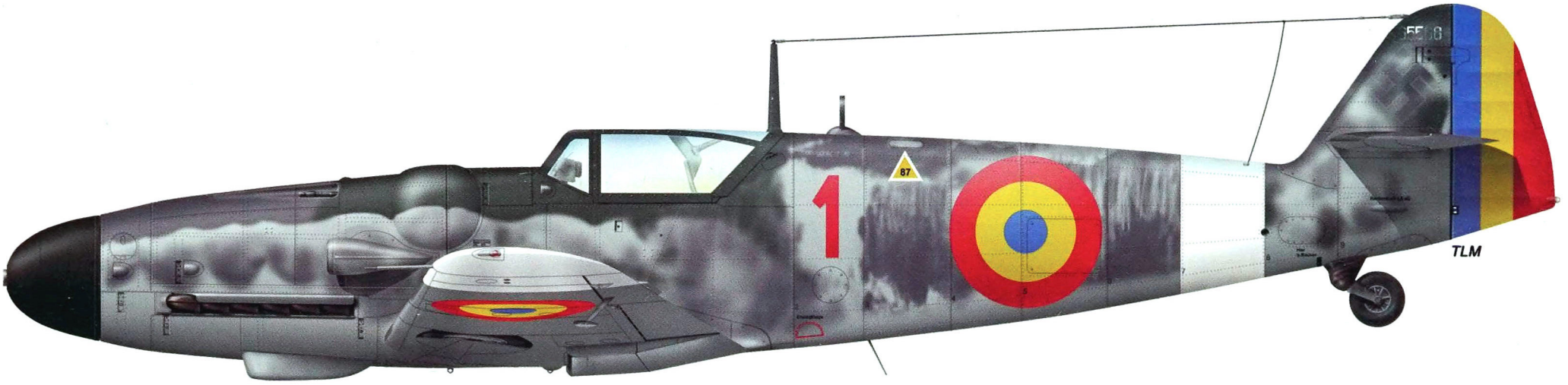


Bf 109 G-6 "White 2".

Flown by *Căpitan Av.* Popescu Gheorghe-Ciocănel, Commander of *Escadrila* 47, *Grupul* 9 *Vânătoare*, Tecuci airfield, July 1944.

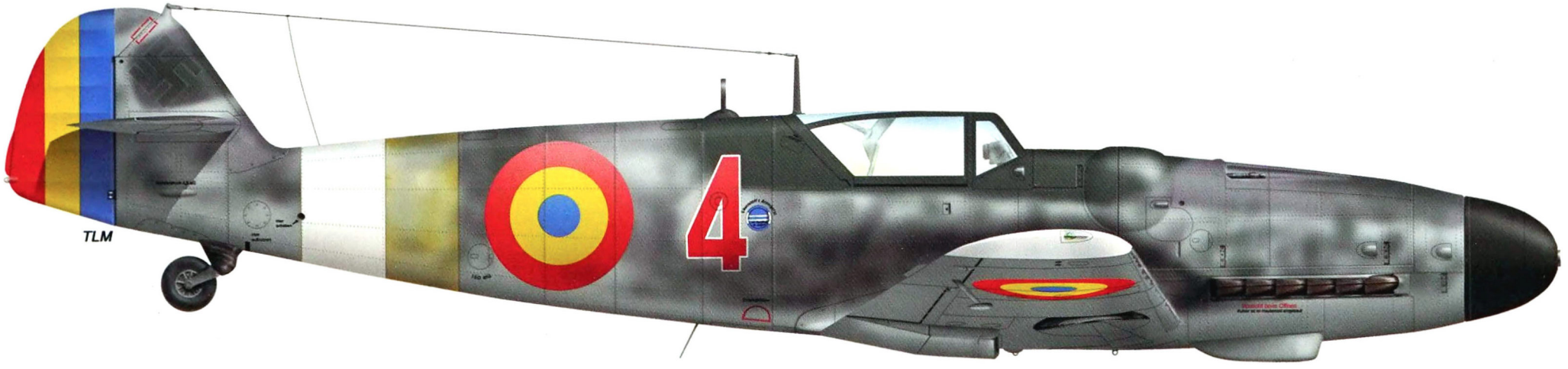
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. This aircraft was Popescu-Ciocănel's personal mount. On 26 July 1944, he was shot down over Tecuci in combat with P-51 Mustangs of the 31st FG /15th USAF. Badly burned, Popescu-Ciocănel died in hospital ten days later. In 1941 Popescu-Ciocănel flew as a short range-reconnaissance pilot with an IAR 39 biplane unit. As a fighter pilot he flew more than 200 combat sorties and took part in more than 40 aerial battles, scoring 13 confirmed victories.



Bf 109 G-6 "Red 1".

Flown by *Lt. Av.* Ion Galea, *Grupul* 7/9 *Vânătoare*, Miskolc Hungary, July 1945.

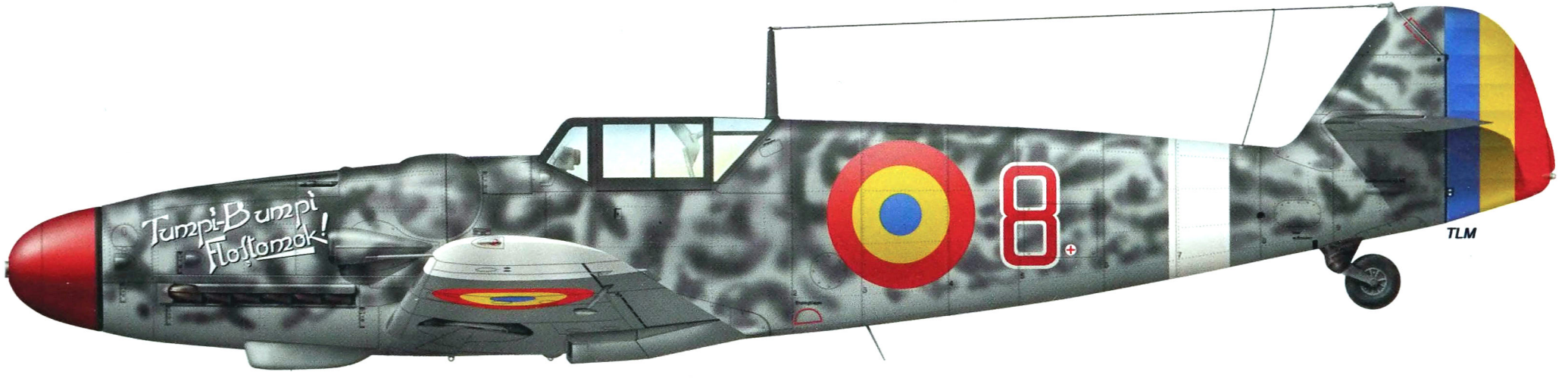
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. At the end of the war, Galea's tally was five confirmed and two unconfirmed victories.



Bf 109 G-6 "Red 4".

Grupul 7/9 *Vânătoare*, Western front, spring 1945.

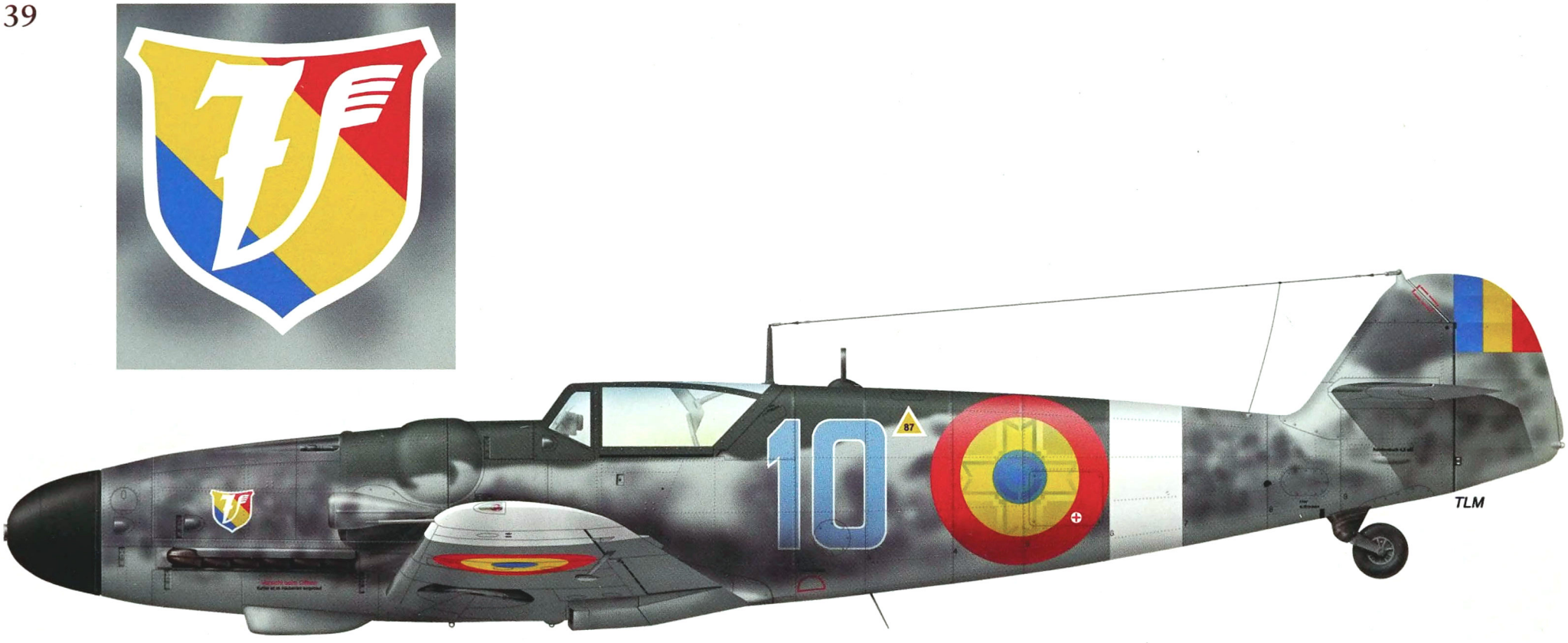
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. Note the old Axis yellow band still visible on fuselage alongside the new markings, comprising a white fuselage band and white wing tips.



Bf 109 G-6 "Red 8" "*Ţumpi Bumpi Floştomok!*".

Flown by *Lt. Av.* Baciu Dumitru, *Grupul* 1 *Vânătoare*, May 1945.

Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. On 4 May 1945, *Lt. Av.* Baciu scored the last Romanian aerial victory of the war when he shot down a Soviet Yak fighter that attacked his element of two Bf 109 Gs over Czechoslovakia, even though they were allies. He was shot down himself in this short dogfight but he emerged unhurt.

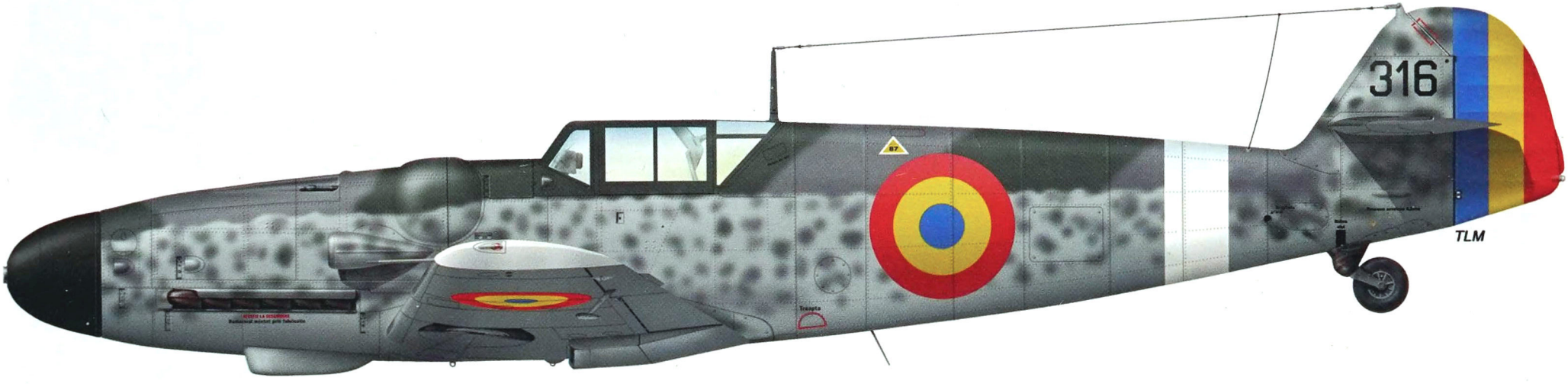


Bf 109 G-6 "Blue 10".

Grupul 7/9 *Vânătoare*, Piestany January 1945.

Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76.

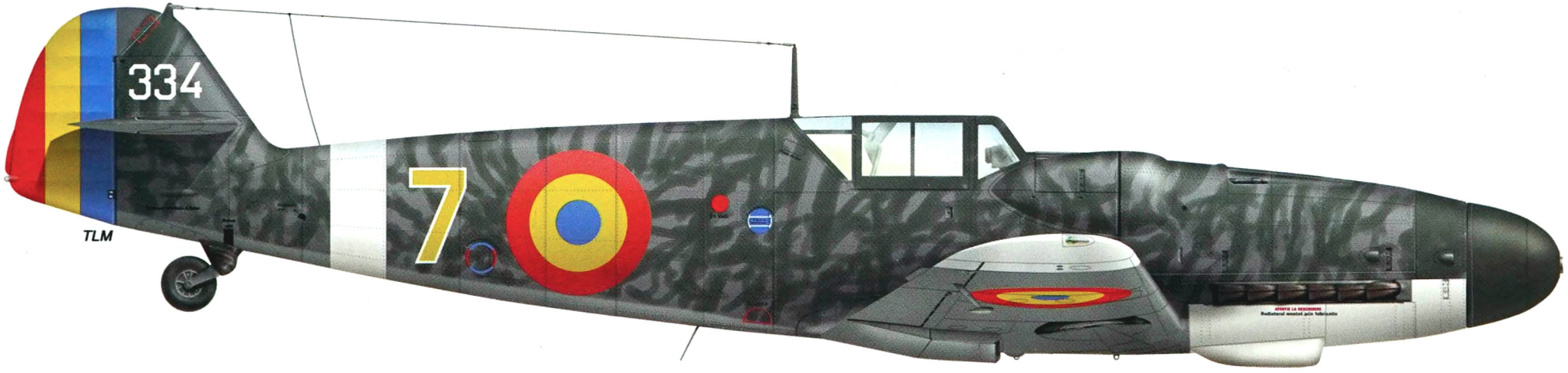
Note the 7th Group emblem, a "winged 7 on a tricolour shield" adopted in the summer of 1944. The former King Michael Cross markings are still partially visible under the roundels on the fuselage.



Bf 109 Ga-6 No. 316.

Flown by *Lt. Av.* Tudor Greceanu, *Grupul 7/9 Vânătoare*, Lucenec, Czechoslovakia, May 1945.

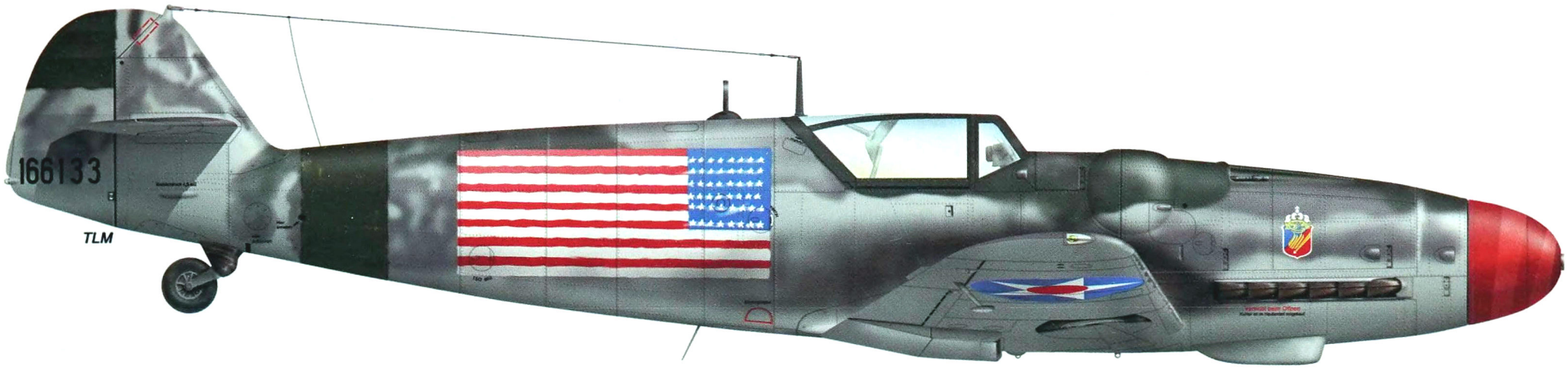
Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. This was the first Bf 109 Ga-6 built by IAR Braşov.
Lt. Av. Tudor Greceanu flew 347 combat sorties and took part in more than 100 aerial battles. His final tally was 18 confirmed and five unconfirmed victories.



Bf 109 Ga-6 No. 334.

Flown by *Lt. Av.* Tulbure Gheorghe, *Flotila 1 Vânătoare*, Popeşti Leordeni.

Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76.
Note the unusual camouflage pattern and the figure '7' painted on the fuselage. It also has the typical blisters seen on Bf 109 Ga-6s built by IAR Braşov.



Bf 109 G-6, W.Nr. 166133, "American Flag".

Flown by *Cpt. Av.* Constantin Bâzu Cantacuzino, Foggia-Italy, August 1944.

Upper surfaces *Graugrün* RLM 74 and *Grauviolett* RLM 75. Undersides *Lichtblau* RLM 76. This is the aircraft that Cantacuzino used to transport to Italy Lt. Col. James A. Gunn III, the highest ranking USAAF prisoner of war held in Romania, as part of a secret diplomatic mission. For this occasion, Bf 109 G-6 W.Nr. 166133 (formerly "White 31" of *Lt. Av.* Duşescu) was decorated with US markings comprising the American flag on both sides of the fuselage and early type US stars on the wings. The yellow fuselage band on the fuselage and Romanian tricolour on the rudder were covered with green paint. The spinner that was previously painted RLM 70 *Schwarzgrün* and decorated with a white spiral was over-sprayed with red to comply with the red identification colour applied to the nose of American fighters in Italy. Only the emblem of *Grupul* 9 *Vânătoare* "*Dessloch-Şerbănescu*" was retained.

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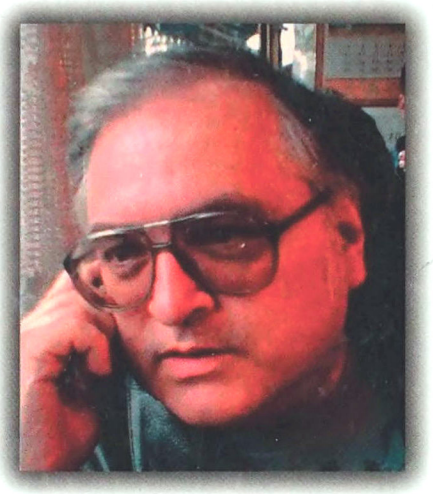

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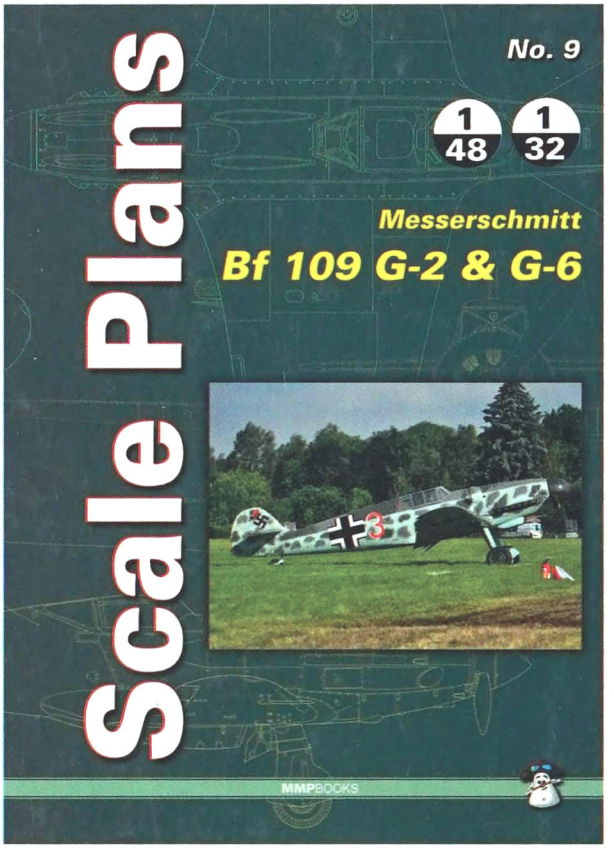

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